



97-104

April 14, 1997

APR 18 1997

Mr. Lester Snow, Manager
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite. 1155
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: CALFED Bay - Delta Efficient Water Use Program

Dear Lester:

The CALFED Water Use Efficiency Program has released a draft approach for efficient agricultural water management, dated March 6, 1997. We respectfully submit the following comments relating to this program.

Executive Summary

1. Page 4, Water Management Planning and Implementation.

In several places throughout the current draft of the water use efficiency program, CALFED does not refer to water conservation plans developed pursuant to the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA). Where CVPIA plans are mentioned, it is clear that CALFED intends to require federal contractors to submit plans approved by Reclamation to the AB 3616 Agricultural Water Council. We recommend that CALFED refer to CVPIA plans equally with the AB 3616 plans, and restate its earlier position that CALFED will consider either approved CVPIA plans or AB 3616 MOU plans for purposes of meeting CALFED goals. CALFED should not require contractors, who obtain approval from Reclamation, to submit plans developed under an entirely separate program to the AB 3616 Water Management Council.

2. Page 5, Technical and Planning Assistance.

We agree with funding for these important activities. However, the current funding levels available through Proposition 204 may not provide sufficient funding to meet CALFED goals. We recommend additional funding within the CALFED long-term program for these programs.

3. Page 5, Management Improvements to Achieve Multiple Benefits.

We strongly encourage CALFED to implement this principle, especially in the Sacramento Valley, where water supplies to agricultural lands also provide numerous other beneficial uses, including wildlife habitat and groundwater recharge.

We recommend CALFED review this principle for consistency with other CALFED objectives, including that stated on page 1 of Lester Snow's memorandum, dated March 7, 1997, which states that water users shall implement practices that have a benefit/cost ratio greater than one. This concept only

takes into account financial issues, and not impacts caused by water management strategies to other important beneficial uses.

4. Page 5, Assurances.

First, CALFED should explain why additional assurances are needed above those already stated - participation in water transfers and the water bank and receipt of "new" water. Second, if CALFED can justify additional assurances, is CALFED proposing to draft a new conservation approach, entirely separate from the AB 3616 MOU?

Introduction

5. Page 9, Water Use Efficiency Today.

We suggest CALFED reemphasize the past efforts by the agricultural community to achieve water use efficiency in California. Also, we suggest that CALFED restate its intention in paragraph two of this section, that water efficiency programs will not cause redirected impacts to other beneficial uses.

Program Linkage

6. Page 11, Water Quality.

CALFED should recognize and evaluate the conflicts between water conservation and pricing on water quality. Although this section highlights potential benefits to water quality from efficiency programs, it neglects to refer to potential impacts to the quality of agricultural water supplies and habitat caused by water conservation practices.

In several locations in the Sacramento Valley, for example, water conservation programs, have reduced the quality of agricultural water supplies, decreased the quality of water in agricultural drains for waterfowl and other wildlife and reduced the volume of water for groundwater recharge. In some cases, reduced diversions of water will significantly impact the volume and quality of instream flows for anadromous fish and may result in less wildlife habitat caused by changes in cropping patterns. Consistent with the CALFED Solution Principles, we suggest you add reference to avoiding redirected impacts to other beneficial uses.

The same principle applies to the "Ecosystem Quality Section." CALFED must acknowledge that ecosystem includes wetlands and agricultural lands as well as the rivers and streams in the Bay-Delta watershed.

7. Page 11, Financing.

We suggest that you entirely strike and redraft this section. First, we are not clear of the relevance of the statements made in this section. Is the Efficient Water Use Program advocating higher costs for water? Does CALFED believe that pricing mechanism always result in the most beneficial use of water, taking into account desired cropping patterns, water quality for wetlands, groundwater

recharge, etc.? What is the relationship of this program to water provided for the ecosystem and the price of that water?

Agricultural Objectives

8. Pages 14-15, AB 3616 and CVPIA Plans; Page 15, Agricultural Assurances.

We believe that CALFED should not require water users who have implemented a CVPIA water conservation plan to submit the plan to the AB 3616 Agricultural Water Council. It would be unwise to require federal contractors to seek approval for their plans from one CALFED agency and again seek approval from individuals involved in an unrelated voluntary program that utilizes a completely different cost/benefit analysis. Either an approved Reclamation plan must suffice to comply with these assurances or CALFED should work with Reclamation to adopt the AB 3616 MOU for its contractors.

Agricultural Water Use Approach

9. Page 17, General Issues.

CALFED's reference in the third paragraph to degradation of water quality should be clarified. First, the term "excess" is inappropriate in that it prejudices the utility of the water and portrays that the water is not beneficially used, when in fact, it may be. Second, while it is true that in some cases, diversions can cause decreased water quality in some streams, it is equally true that diversions can increase water quality for wetlands habitat and, where the water supply is imported, improve the quality and volume of water supplies. Decreased diversions resulting from "efficiency" plans can result in degraded aquatic and wetlands habitat.

Water Management Planning/ Implementation

10. Pages 18-19, AB 3616 and CVPIA Plans.

We strongly recommend that CALFED adopt a plan that is based on these two major planning efforts. CVPIA contractors should not be forced to submit a plan to the AB 3616 Agricultural water Council if they already have an approved plan. Many non-federal and environmental signatories are likely to be unfamiliar with Reclamation's criteria.

The current draft reflects a departure from previous drafts which treated AB 3616 and the CVPIA plans equally. We do not recall the BDAC Advisory Committee or the Water Use Efficiency Work Group changing this concept.

Agricultural Water Use Assurances

11. Page 22, CALFED Evaluation.

Prior to the conclusion of the time period (for example, one year prior to a two-year deadline) we recommend the CALFED evaluate the status of the number of signatories, the reasons for the success or failure of the AB 3616 program and reasons why individual water users have declined to participate.

CALFED agencies should work with water users to resolve reasonable issues of non-compliance prior to moving forward with a mandatory approach.

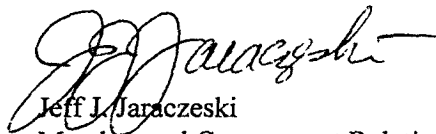
Water Transfers

12. Page 28.

CALFED should ensure that the water conservation and water transfer programs are consistent and efforts should be made to remove current impediments to transferring conserved water. We recommend that all water transfer issues be considered by a newly appointed BDAC Work Group, comprised of individuals familiar with these issues.

We hope that the forgoing comments on the March 6 Draft of the Water Use Efficiency Program are helpful in finalizing the program components. Please call us directly if you have any questions or comments on these comments or regarding the continued development of this program.

Sincerely,



Jeff I. Jaraczski
Member and Government Relations

cc: Rick Soehren, CALFED
Ed Craddock, DWR